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## Chapter X- Public Use and Education

### X.1 Background

The Frederick City Watershed (FCW), also known as the Frederick Municipal Forest, is an integral link in a chain of public lands stretching from the I-70 corridor north to the Michaux State Forest in Pennsylvania. It borders Gambrill State Park and is adjacent to Cunningham Falls and in close proximity to South Mountain State Parks, as well as Catoctin Mountain Park and the Town of Emmitsburg Watershed. These sites, in addition to their natural, cultural, and historic values, provide a variety of recreational opportunities. Decisions affecting public uses (recreational opportunities) on the FCW are integrated into management decisions that are consistent with the resource protection goals laid out in **Chapter 1** of this Forest Stewardship Plan: *“Provide opportunities for the enjoyment of the natural resources on the Forest by making appropriate areas available for resource-based, low-impact, human-powered recreational activities and environmental education programs consistent with resource values of the Forest”*.

The Frederick City Watershed receives many visitors seeking outdoor recreational opportunities each year. This is likely due to its proximity to Washington, DC and Baltimore City, as well as the regionally unique recreation opportunities it provides.

## **X.2 Current and Future Public Uses**

The demand both nationwide and locally indicate that outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, canoeing and kayaking are growing in popularity. The public's pursuit of these activities continues to play a major role in Maryland's economic growth and tourism industry. The City of Frederick is uniquely poised to benefit from carefully regulated recreational use of the FCW, provided these uses are not detrimental to water quality and natural resource protection. Therefore, all public use proposals will be evaluated by the City to determine their compatibility with:

- The maintenance of water quality;
- The implementation of sustainable forest management;
- The conservation of wildlife;
- The conservation of plant and animal habitats and other sensitive areas;
- And the protection of cultural resources.

The primary types of public use to be permitted on the Frederick City Watershed include low-impact activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, biking, birding, rock climbing, horseback riding, nature/wildlife observation, and environmental education. In select cases, minimal development may be undertaken to provide and maintain multi-use, natural surface trails, mountain bike-specific trails, hiking-specific trails, disabled hunter access, scenic vistas, and environmental education infrastructure.

### **X.2.1 Hunting**

Hunting, trapping and fishing have traditionally been some of the primary recreational uses of the FCW. The most popular game species hunted within the FCW is by far the White-tailed Deer. On average, approximately 200-300 deer are harvested from the area, with the majority of deer taken being antlerless. Other popular wildlife species pursued in the FCW included the wild turkey, which may be hunted for several weeks during the spring season. Ruffed grouse, American woodcock, fox and grey squirrels are also popular hunted species. A variety of furbearing mammals can also be found throughout the property including raccoons, beaver, mink, red and grey fox, opossum, and striped skunks. In addition to these animal species, there is a relatively new furbearer in the FCW, which is the coyote. This animal migrated from the surrounding states and is now a permanent resident of the area. Another new arrival to the area is the American black bear. This large animal is now quite common and can be observed within the FCW on a regular basis.

To ensure that hunting and other associated wildlife management activities continue into the future, the City and the Department of Natural Resources have entered into a Cooperative Wildlife Management Agreement. This agreement, initiated in the late 1970s, continues to provide wildlife associated recreation, as well as the management of habitats and populations on the property. Hunting is the primary tool employed to manage healthy populations of animals such as white-tailed deer, which is necessary for the protection of forest health and habitat of other species. The FCW is currently open to hunting, trapping and fishing during the established seasons.

Wildlife populations must be managed to ensure a healthy forest. Therefore, public hunting opportunities are provided to manage healthy populations of game species and ensure the protection of the forest and other habitats. This plan attempts to identify the proper combination of hunting as well as other appropriate recreational use. The FCW is open to public hunting, trapping and fishing in season in compliance with all Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

Frederick City Watershed is one of the more popular public hunting areas in Maryland. This is considered a symbiotic relationship between the FCW resource and public use because many hunters rely on FCW as a place to enjoy their sport while MD DNR relies on hunting as a tool for maintaining some wildlife populations at an ecologically sustainable level.

Hunting with rifles, handguns, shotguns, bows and muzzleloaders are permitted in all designated areas in accordance with state and federal laws. Possession or use of weapons is prohibited in the FCW outside of regular open hunting season. Target shooting is prohibited. All game birds and game mammals may be hunted. Tree stands and blinds are limited to those of a temporary nature, which must be removed or dismantled at the end of each day. The hunting season on the FCW conforms to standard hunting seasons and bag limits adopted by state and federal regulations.

### **X.2.2 Fishing**

Fishing for native, wild brook trout and stocked rainbow trout, has been an important recreational component to the FMF since its inception. Clifford Branch and both forks of Fishing Creek offer anglers the best opportunity in Frederick County to pursue Maryland's only native trout species (Brook trout). The forested watershed maintains the high water quality in these streams required to support self-sustaining populations of brook trout. The left fork of Fishing Creek and two impoundments, Whiskey Springs Pond and Hamburg Pond, are also stocked with hatchery-reared rainbow trout each spring to provide additional, seasonal trout fishing recreation. Largemouth bass and sunfish are popular with anglers in several fire ponds as well. Fishing is permitted in all waters within the FCW except Fishing Creek Reservoir in accordance with state laws and regulations.

### X.2.3 Recreational Trail Uses

Over the last several decades, trail-based recreational activities such as hiking, trail running and mountain biking have grown more popular within the FCW. In the mid-1970s, the City was approached by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) about developing a trail that would connect Frederick City Watershed with the Appalachian Trail. The City agreed and approximately 11 miles of trail were constructed within the FCW by the PATC. This trail, named the Catoctin Trail (blue blazed trail), was historically the only City-sanctioned trail within the FCW. Since the development of the Catoctin Trail, various groups have gradually expanded their use of the FCW. In the FCW there are over 75 miles of fire trails that were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) in the 1930s, which remain in use today. As the popularity of the area has grown, these fire trails have been increasingly utilized as unsanctioned trails. Additionally, other unsanctioned trail sections have been cut over the years without proper authority from the City. The increased recreational use of the existing trail network, as well as user-created and enhanced trails, demonstrates the need for a robust outdoor recreation management plan for the FCW.

Unless otherwise posted, all natural surface trails within the FCW are open to human powered recreation, including hiking, mountain biking, trail running, cross country skiing, horseback riding, rock climbing, as well as hunting and fishing access. These activities will be encouraged on all tracts of the FCW provided there are no other user conflicts and such activities are not adverse to the previously stated Forest Stewardship goals.

Provisions may be made for user-group specific trails (i.e., directional, bike-specific trails, pedestrian trails, etc.). Trails may be limited access for reasons of resource protection or to create the desired user experience. Limited access trails will be clearly signed at trailheads and intersections, as well as clearly indicated in the trail system map in **Appendix A- Trail System Map**.

To facilitate an attractive and sustainable trail network, the City has adopted the United States Forest Service (USFS) and International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) trail standards for construction and maintenance, and may draw on the Whistler Trail Standards for additional technical assistance with directional, bike-specific trails. These documents are incorporated by reference (*Hesselbarth and Vachowski 2007*) (*Webber 2004, 2007*) (*Resort Municipality of Whistler, 2003*).

The FCW trails are categorized according the Frederick City Watershed Trail Classification Matrix (**Figure X.1**), developed from the United States Forest Service trail standards (*Hesselbarth and Vachowski 2007*). These categorizations determine construction and maintenance standards, as well as guidelines for recreational trail use.

**Figure X.1**

**FREDERICK CITY WATERSHED TRAIL CLASSIFICATION MATRIX**

<b>Trail Attributes</b>	<b>Trail Class 1</b> <i>Minimally Developed</i>	<b>Trail Class 2</b> <i>Moderately Developed</i>	<b>Trail Class 3</b> <i>Developed</i>	<b>Trail Class 4</b> <i>One Way Developed</i>
<b>Tread and Flow</b>	Tread continuous and discernable, but narrow and rough	Tread continuous and obvious	Tread wide, obvious, and with few irregularities	One way, tread continuous and obvious, but steep and rough
	Single lane, with few to no passing areas	Single lane with frequent allowances for passing	Single lane with allowances for passing or Double lane	Single lane with few passing areas
	Predominately native materials	Native or imported materials	Native or imported materials, may be hardened	Predominately native materials, may be hardened
<b>Obstacles</b>	Common, naturally occurring, often substantial and intended to provide increased challenge	May be common, may provide increased challenge	Infrequent, and insubstantial not intended to provide challenge	Common, naturally occurring or man made, often substantial and intended to provide increased challenge
	Narrow passages, brush, steep grades, rocks and logs present - may feature "filter" elements to indicate upcoming level of difficulty	Blockages cleared to define route	Blockages and vegetation cleared from trailway	Steep grades, rocks, and logs present - trails feature "filter" elements to indicate upcoming difficulty
<b>Tread Width</b>	6"-24"	18"-36"	36"-72"	18"-36"
<b>Structure Min. Width</b>	18"	24"	36"	18"
<b>Design Surface</b>	Native, with limited grading	Native, with some on-site borrow or imported material where needed for stabilization and occasional grading	Native, with improved sections of borrow or imported materials and routing grading	Native, with limited grading
	May be continuously rough	Intermittently rough	Stable with minor roughness	May be continuously rough
	Sections of soft tread on grades <5% may be common	Sections of soft tread on grades of <5% may be present, but not common	Sections of soft tread not present	Sections of soft tread not present
	Obstructions likely common may be continuous 24" or less	Obstructions may be common, but not continuous 12" or less	Obstructions uncommon and not continuous 8" or less	Obstructions likely common and may be continuous 48" or less

**Source: US Forest Service Trail Fundamentals & Trail Management Objectives 2011 FSH 2353.142**

# FREDERICK CITY WATERSHED TRAIL CLASSIFICATION MATRIX

Trail Attributes	Trail Class 1 <i>Minimally Developed</i>	Trail Class 2 <i>Moderately Developed</i>	Trail Class 3 <i>Developed</i>	Trail Class 4 <i>One Way Developed</i>
Design Grade	Target grade 5%-20%	Target grade 5%-12%	Target grade 2%-10%	Target grade 5%-30%
	Short pitch max. 30%	Short pitch max. 20%	Short pitch max. 12%	Short pitch max. 50%
	Max. pitch density 20%-30% of trail	Max. pitch density 10%-20% of trail	Max. pitch density 05%-15% of trail	Max. pitch density 20%-40% of trail
Design Clearing	Height 6'	Height 7'-9'	Height 8'-10'	Height 7'-9'
	Width 24"-36"	Width 36-48"	Width 48"-84"	Width 36"-48"
	Turn radius 2'-3'	Turn radius 3'-6'	Turn radius 6'-10'	Turn radius 3'-6'
Constructed Features & Elements	Structures minimal to non-existent with native materials only	Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity constructed with native materials	Structures may be common as needed; constructed with native or imported materials	Structures may be common as needed; constructed with native or imported materials
	Drainage provided without structures	Drainage provided via structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure	Drainage provided via structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure	Drainage provided via structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure
	Natural fords, if any	Natural or constructed fords	Constructed or natural fords	Constructed or natural fords
	Typically no bridges	Bridges as needed for resource protection and access	Bridges as needed for access or convenience	Bridges as needed for access or convenience
Signs	Route identification only at junctions	Route identification primarily at junctions	Route identification at junctions	Route identification only at junctions
	Minimal blazing	Blazing for user reassurance	Blazing for user reassurance	Blazing for user reassurance
	No destination signing	Destination signing infrequent	Destination signing infrequent	No destination signing
	Informational/interpretive signage not present	Informational/interpretive signage not common	Informational/interpretive signage not common	Informational/interpretive signage not present
	Difficulty/risk signs at trailhead			Difficulty/risk signs at trailhead <b>and</b> before features
Managed Uses	Hiker - biker only	All non-motorized use	All non-motorized use	biker-only
Typical Recreation Environments & Experience	Natural with limited modification	Natural, modified	Natural, modified	Natural, Modified
	Wilderness, Primitive experience	Primitive, Semi-primitive, natural experience	Natural experience	Natural experience
PAGE 2			Includes unmarked forest access roads that may be gated	

#### *X.2.3.1 Hiking at the Frederick City Watershed*

Hiking at the Frederick City Watershed offers residents a unique backcountry experience close to a major metropolitan area. Unless otherwise posted, all sanctioned trails and forest roads are open to pedestrian access. Visitors are required to stay on sanctioned trail and road networks to avoid impacts to sensitive species and habitats.

#### *X.2.3.2 Mountain Biking at the Frederick City Watershed*

The Frederick City Watershed is the home to a nationally renowned system of trails that offer a regionally unique riding experience. Trails categorized as Trail Class 4 under the Trail Classification Matrix (**Figure X.1**) may be designated, at the sole discretion of the City, as directional, bike-only trails to preserve the safety and user experience of visitors. Unless otherwise posted, all sanctioned trails and roads are open to cyclist access. Riders are required to stay on sanctioned trail and road networks to avoid impacts to sensitive species and habitats.

#### *X.2.3.3 Horseback Riding at the Frederick City Watershed*

As one of the DC-Baltimore metro area's larger, less developed public lands, the Frederick City Watershed offers an excellent opportunity for area equestrians to experience backcountry trail riding. Unless otherwise posted, all sanctioned trails and roads are open to equestrian access. Horse trailer parking is available at the City's maintenance shed on Mountindale Road. The potential for invasive species introduction, organic accumulation from horse feces, soil degradation, and other environmental factors have been used to evaluate which trails and roads are sustainable for equestrian use. Riders are required to stay on sanctioned trails and road networks to avoid impacts to sensitive species and habitats.

#### *X.2.3.4 Rock Climbing at the Frederick City Watershed*

Several areas of the Watershed are used for technical rock climbing and bouldering. Technical rock climbing requires the use of anchors and both types of rock recreation often conflict with critical habitat. Rock climbing and bouldering will be limited to sections of rock outcroppings that are within the sanctioned trail network area. No permanent anchors will be placed in the rocks. Climbers may access these rock outcroppings only on sanctioned trails.

#### *X.2.3.5 Other Acceptable Trail Uses*

Unless otherwise excluded, non-motorized recreational uses are acceptable. Examples include non-motorized winter sports such as cross country skiing and

snowshoeing and geo-caching. These uses are strictly limited to the official road and trail network, as the Frederick City Watershed is home to a variety of rare, threatened or endangered (RT&E) species and sensitive habitats.

#### **X.2.4 Education and Public Outreach**

The City of Frederick's primary purpose for owning the Watershed is the protection of the water quality. Approximately 11-13% of the City's clean water supply comes from the Forest. The City also desires to be a national model of integration between resource protection, sustainable forest management, and recreation. Increasing the public's awareness of the importance of sustainable management and its connection to the health of the Chesapeake Bay is a key objective.

The Frederick City Watershed can be an outdoor classroom where the public and land managers learn from the FCW and each other. Education and development of public stakeholders are critical to the long-term success of the FCW, and these goals will be achieved by:

- The development and timely update of the Frederick City Watershed website;
- The development and public distribution of brochures and other written material about the FCW;
- Engagement with recreational user groups to create and grow a broad coalition of conservation-minded stakeholders;
- And, the provision of tours and other public forums for educating the public about the FCW.

##### *Frederick City Department of Public Works Website*

The website (<https://www.cityoffrederick.com/index.aspx?NID=67>) has been and will continue to be an valuable mechanism for communicating with the public. It has been used to share general information and annual work plan (AWP) projects. Information on the special use permit system that is in place and links to request permits from the Maryland DNR & the City of Frederick will be provided at the DPW Website.

#### **X.2.4.1 Educational Materials**

It is recommended the Department of Public Works provide interpretive markers or informational kiosks at the public use areas experiencing the highest visitation. These kiosks would include a map and information on the FCW and sustainable forest management.



One example of this approach is found at the Green Ridge State Forest Headquarters and Visitor Center in Allegany County, MD. The Department should also consider the development of digital media that contains information about the FCW, its resources and the connection to the Chesapeake Bay. This could be a cooperative effort between the managing agencies and user groups holding official agreements with the City.

#### *X.2.4.2 Public Field and Competitive Events*

The City may, in cooperation with public stakeholders and NGOs, sponsor field educational days to demonstrate to the public the value of sustainable forest management, working landscapes, and public involvement in the maintenance of recreational resources. These field days may include, but are not limited to, trail maintenance and construction, stream and roadside cleanups, invasive removals, service learning projects with local schools and universities, and staff participation at community events. Offering these opportunities for involvement allows the City to educate FCW visitors on forest management and human impacts.

The City will continue to sponsor cooperative research projects as part of the implementation of the Forest Management Plan. Some of the existing partnerships include the University of Maryland and local community service organizations.

Continued engagement with partner organizations such as TROT, MORE, Frederick Bicycle Coalition, IMBA, PATC, Maryland Native Plant Society, cultural heritage, and recreation advocacy organizations will facilitate collaboration on projects and the sharing of best management practices. Expanding outreach efforts to other groups like the Maryland Conservation Corps, local schools, and scouting organizations will add to the resources available for the implementation of projects that help create Watershed stewards.

The City should continue to support special events on the FCW that are sustainable and compatible uses within the FCW to foster the public's connection to the land and public support for the forest management program. Such events may include trail runs, adventure or bicycle races, search and rescue conferences and similar events.

Currently, the Catoctin 50k Trail Run is a race that utilizes the Catoctin (Blue) Trail through the FCW. The Catoctin 50K Trail Run is an out-and-back race, starting at the Tea Room in Gambrill State Park, proceeding on the Blue trail through Gambrill State Park, the Frederick City Watershed and into Cunningham State Park, where racers turn around. The race is held annually in July and has occurred 21 times since its inception in 1994.

The scheduling of special events should be compatible with seasonal recreational uses and management activities. As an example, organized events should not be scheduled during peak hunting seasons such as deer firearm season or spring turkey hunting season.

Recreation at the FCW can be a tool to facilitate interpretation of sustainable forestry management and other natural and cultural heritage themes within the FCW to educate and connect the public to their public lands. One example of this model is Geocaching. This is a GPS based activity similar to a scavenger hunt where people navigate by GPS to locate a “cache” that has been placed at given coordinates. Typically, these caches allow the finder to trade a trinket and log their discovery in a logbook. Interpretive materials that provide educational information about the significant feature at the site and sustainable management practices can be included.

The City may restrict access to portions of the FCW for maintenance of habitat, special events, or at any other time or reason deemed appropriate by The City of Frederick. These occurrences will likely be rare and will be advertised in advance.

#### **X.2.5 Implementation and Three-year Work Plan**

As with the other management activities, recreational and educational activities will be addressed in the three-year work plan. These activities will be reviewed by City of Frederick staff, and if necessary, Maryland DNR. Once these are reviewed and approved, they will be implemented. Public use activities will also be monitored to ensure there is not conflict with the other management goals or degradation of the sensitive resources found on the FCW.

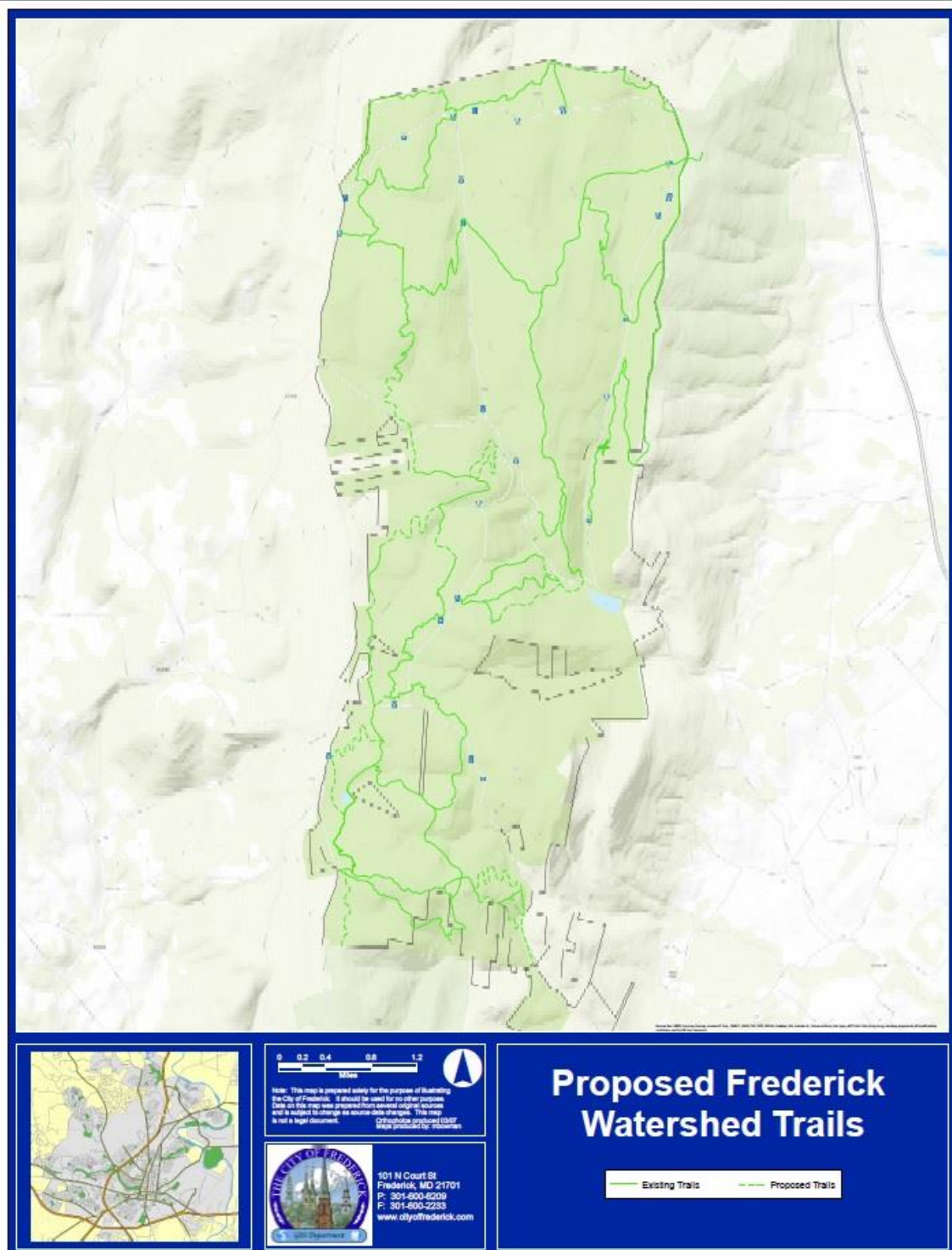
To assess the need for trail maintenance or rerouting, the City has adopted the use of the Frederick City Watershed Trail Assessment Tool. The tool is based USFS trail assessment worksheets and is used in conjunction with the Frederick City Watershed Trail Classification Matrix. The tool is based on the science presented in the *USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook*, *Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack*, and *Managing Mountain Biking*. This tool was developed by the Mayor's Ad Hoc Watershed committee which consisted of natural resource professionals, non-profit recreation and conservation groups and representatives from a cross-section of user groups. See **Appendix D- Trail Assessment Tools** for instructions and examples.

Land Use Agreements and/or Memorandum of Understanding documents may need to be negotiated and processed for organizations cooperating with the City on projects and/or events on the FCW.

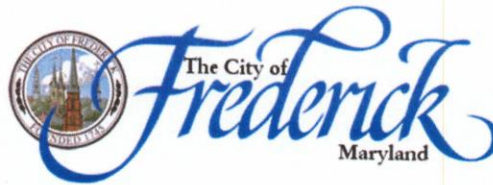
#### *X.2.5.1 Public Partnerships and Involvement*

In order to accomplish the goals laid out in this plan, and provide the most cost-effective and sustainable recreation facilities, it is critical that the City partner closely with all stakeholders, including advocacy and recreation groups. Partnership with organizations like Potomac Valley Fly Fishers, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Maryland Native Plant Society, local universities, Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), Trail Riders of Today (TROT), Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE), and Frederick Bicycle Coalition will ensure both continued stakeholder investment and best practices for development, maintenance, and use of the recreational facilities on the FCW. For a current list of stakeholders holding MOUs regarding the Frederick City Watershed, see **Appendix C- MOUs, Agreements and Volunteer Groups**.

## Appendix A-Proposed Watershed Trail Network Map



## Appendix B- Posted FCW Regulations



### **WELCOME TO THE CITY OF FREDERICK'S MUNICIPAL FOREST**

**- ONLY YOU CAN PROTECT OUR CLEAN WATER SUPPLY -**

1. No trail cutting. This includes the alteration or construction of trail, ramp, bridge, jump, or similar structure using manmade or naturally occurring materials.\*
2. No removal, disturbance, damage to or destruction of trees, plants, rocks, minerals, soil, downed timber or other materials.\*
3. No dogs off lead unless under handler's control at all times.
4. No yard waste, dumping, or littering.
5. No motorized vehicles off roads.
6. No washing or repairing of vehicles.
7. No target shooting.
8. No camping.
9. No fires.

**FOR EMERGENCIES CALL 911**

**FOREST CLOSED ONE HOUR AFTER SUNSET UNTIL  
ONE HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE**

(Except activity on County roads)

Report violations and suspicious activity to the Frederick County Sheriff's Office  
**301-600-2071**

Report poaching or injured wildlife to the Maryland Natural Resources Police  
**800-628-9944**

This list is not all inclusive. All applicable Federal, State, and local laws are enforceable in this Watershed

\*The City of Frederick may issue written consent for limited forest maintenance activities at its sole discretion.  
The written consent must be in the possession of those doing any authorized work

## Appendix C- Trail Assessment Tools

### Trail Assessment Tool

#### Instructions:

1. This tool will be used in conjunction with the *Frederick Watershed Trail Classification Matrix* for determination of the trail classification type.
2. The user of this tool must be familiar with proper trail construction concepts as outlined in the publications *USFS Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook*, *Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack*, and *Managing Mountain Biking*.
3. This tool should be used with 2 or more trail assessors to provide a balance in perspectives.
4. When assigning values and classifications for the categories below, use the value that represents the largest portion of the trail being assessed. Deviations from the value can be noted to provide a complete picture.
5. Trail segment IDs, Trail Names and/or Trail Numbers should correspond to the associated Frederick Watershed Trail map provided with this tool.
6. For initial trail assessments a GPS device or smart phone application capable of recording GPX data should be used to determine distance and average grade.

## TRAIL ASSESSMENT TOOL

Date:		Assessor(s):	
<b>Basic Information</b>			
Trail Segment ID:		Trail Color:	
Trail Name or Number:		Trail Classification:	
Trail Status:	Open	Class I	
	Closed	Class II	
	Under Construction	Class III	
		Class IV	
<b>Detail Information</b>			
Trail Segment Length:		Typical Width:	
Typical Grade:		Typical Cross slope:	
Structures or Obstacles present?	Bridges	Short Pitch Maximum:	
	Gates	Are there any water crossings on the trail?	
	Kiosks	Yes	
	Retaining walls	If yes, how many crossings?	
	Rock outcroppings	Are the crossings seasonal?	
	Technical Trail Features	Do any segments need realignment?	
	Waterbars/Check dams	Yes	
	Road Transition/Entrance	If YES, describe sections that needs realignment in the "Additional Comments" section	
	Other:		
Other Description:		Average Trail Tread Condition:	
		Good	
		Average	
		Poor	
Average Level of Use:	Heavy	If rated "poor" include description of issues such as erosion, cupping, standing water, etc.	
	Moderate		
	Light		
Are any portions of the trail in a flood plain?	No		
	Yes		
<b>Managed Use</b>			
Allowed Use:	Prohibited Use:	Maintenance Schedule:	Annual
Hiker/pedestrian			Semi-annual
Pack and Saddle			As needed
Bicycle		Primary Trail Maintainer:	
XC Ski			
Forest Maintenance/		Additional Comments:	
Emergency Access			
Other:			
Other Description:			
Special Considerations and Other Activities:			



## Citations

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